

Washington, DC - Today, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) voted in support of the United States Fire Administration Reauthorization bill (H.R. 4847), which authorizes \$292 million over four years to fund FEMA's Fire Administration's programs to assist fire prevention and control, firefighter training and education, and emergency medical services. The bill passed 412-0. — The bill also expands the authority of the National Fire Academy in order to allow it to train fire personnel to respond to large-scale fires across multiple jurisdictions, fires involving hazardous materials, and wildfires, in addition to forest fires and fires caused by terrorist attacks. Furthermore, each fiscal year, 3.6 percent of the funds authorized are to be used to carry out fire technology research and related activities.

“Our nation’s firefighters have chosen a career that truly epitomizes the ‘dignity of danger.’ Daily they put their lives on the line for their fellow citizens, and our nation owes them a debt of gratitude,” said Congressman Sestak. “This funding provides firefighters with the training, education and services they need to help their neighbors while protecting themselves as they provide this most critical of services.”

At a low cost of \$2.59 per U.S. household, the United States Fire Administration Reauthorization bill:

Authorizes the Superintendent of the National Academy for Fire Prevention and Control to include within fire service personnel training:

- o Response, tactics, and strategies for dealing with non-terrorist-caused national catastrophes;
- o Applying new technology and developing strategies and tactics for fighting wildfires;
- o Response, tactics, and strategies for fighting large-scale or multiple fires in a general area that cross jurisdictional boundaries, fires occurring at the wildland-urban interface, and fires involving hazardous materials; and
- o Advanced emergency medical services training.

Requires the Administrator of USFA to include in triennial reports information about changes made to the National Fire Academy curriculum.

Authorizes the Administrator of USFA to:

- o Contract with a nationally recognized organization that meets specified requirements to facilitate the delivery of education and training programs directly to fire service personnel; and
- o Assist the nation's fire services to sponsor and encourage research to improve fire prevention and control in the wildland-urban interface.

Directs the Administrator of USFA to:

- o Use specified funds during FY2009-FY2011 to update the National Fire Incident Reporting system to an Internet-based, real-time incident reporting database;
- o Make available to the public information about fire-related research through a regularly updated Internet-based database;
- o Promote adoption by fire services of voluntary national consensus standards for firefighter health and safety; and
- o Provide liaison to assure coordination of fire service-based emergency medical services programs.

Congressman Sestak has made supporting the needs of first responders a top priority both legislatively and through the grants and appropriations process. To that end, Congressman Sestak voted for the College Opportunity and Affordability Act, which included provisions to provide loan forgiveness to college graduates that pursue careers as fire fighters and other first responders.

The Congressman also hosted a First Responders Grants and Appropriations Seminar in Brookhaven in February as part of an on-going effort to inform his constituents about opportunities to seek funding at the state and federal level for projects. The Congressman compiled the "Pennsylvania 7th Congressional District Federal and State Grants & Resource Directory," a one-stop shop for learning about opportunities to secure project funding, which he distributed to the Seminar participants.

Finally, Congressman Sestak has consistently opposed severe cuts by the President regarding the Assistance for Firefighter Grant (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) programs. In the FY 2008 budget, the President proposed slashing Firefighter Assistance grants by 55 percent. However, the Congressman helped restore this cut – providing \$570 million for the program, \$23 million above FY 2007 and \$270 million above the President's request in the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill. Additionally, the President proposed eliminating the \$115 million SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) program, which helps fund hiring and training of additional firefighters. Instead, Congressman Sestak supported providing \$230 million (an increase of \$115 million).

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.